

In the Eye of the Beholder ...

The Incredible Art of Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum



Genesis addition to the
Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum

The 65th annual CCC Convention & Exposition will be held this September in Newark, NJ, one of the most innovative operations among our Catholic cemeterian membership. While in Newark, attendees will be able to tour several of the cemeteries of the Archdiocese and experience first-hand the amazing art and statuary that resides there, particularly within the Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum. The following article from the New Jersey Catholic magazine describes many of the one-of-a-kind pieces we will have an opportunity to view.

"Communion of Saints"

— by Al Frank

Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum, one of the most ambitious construction projects undertaken at an archdiocesan cemetery, is nearing completion and now ranks as the nation's largest Catholic mausoleum. The \$20 million final phase resembles a large church, with places for prayer beneath soaring roof lines and amid stained glass, statuary and mosaics.

The design reflects an evolution in mausoleum architecture since 1979, when construction on the first section began in the North Arlington cemetery. At the time, mausoleums had fairly standard "box" designs. Only about 5 percent of families chose entombment over burial, compared to 35 percent now. In the meantime, Catholics came to expect



Facial closeup of the final pieta commissioned for completion by Newark. It was shipped from Italy on about Mother's Day and will be at home in the Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum.

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Communion of the Saints, continued

facilities where family members and friends could find comfort and support from the symbols of faith surrounding their departed loved ones, says Andrew Schafer, executive director of the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Cemeteries.

Wider acceptance of cremation was also a part of that evolution. With many more expected to choose that option - about 18 percent of Catholics do now- the newest mausoleums feature niches where customized urns are displayed behind glass.

Opened in 1915, Holy Cross is part of a network of seven archdiocesan cemeteries with 1 million graves and 79,000 crypts and niches in 13 mausoleum buildings.

With a total of 35,747 spaces, the mausoleum at Holy Cross completes 10 years of expansion by Catholic Cemeteries. The other mausoleums are located at Gate of Heaven in East Hanover, Holy Name in Jersey City, St. Gertrude in Woodbridge and Maryrest in Mahwah.

“Our cemeteries are a ministry of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark,” Andy says. “The evolution of our mausoleums from burial space to church design, provide sacred space for powerful rites of passage for us, as we commend to God those we love.”

In addition to pre-planning services, the cemeteries offer monthly Masses, as well as Mass on Memorial Day. In November, Catholic Cemeteries hosts a Concert of Remembrance at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred

Heart in Newark, where the bereaved are invited to inscribe the names of deceased loved ones in a book of remembrance.

Parishes also maintain a network of bereavement ministers who have undergone an archdiocesan training program.

“During bereavement, what many of us cannot put into words, is expressed so remarkably in our ceremonies and rituals,” Andy says. Holy Cross, with its broad lawns and outdoor shrines including one to the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks was always meant to provide “holy ground where the living meet the dead, crossing that mysterious line between time and eternity,” Andy says.

Celebrating the eternal divine bond, initiated at baptism and affirmed in the Christian belief in the communion of Saints, is the theme of the new mausoleum’s 30 major art works. Among them are six floor-to-ceiling mosaics that tell the Genesis story of creation (some are shown below).

Designed by Alexander and Daniela Mandradjiev in their Los Angeles studio, they employ thousands of stones and tiles hand-cut from glass, marble and ceramic depicting the planets, sea creatures, lush vegetation, dinosaurs and Adam and Eve.

Especially commissioned bronzes of St. Francis of Assisi and Kateri Tekakwitha stand vigil in outside gardens, while Lindenwood statues of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Teresa of Calcutta, Frances Xavier Cabrini and Marianne (of Molak’i) Cope repose in bright alcoves at the ends of four corridors.

Some of the stunning mosaics comprising the Genesis Story of Creation



A completed Rondanini Pieta imagines what Michelangelo would have completed had he not died before finishing the work. It will be complemented by a marble statue of St. Helena, the Emperor Constantine's mother, who found the True Cross during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the fourth century.

Stained glass was reclaimed from the now closed churches of St. Lucy in Jersey City and Sacred Heart in the Vailsburg section of Newark. Altars and statues from Sacred Heart of St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Anthony also were refurbished and installed in the mausoleum. They flank the main chapel where a new cross of Lindenwood hangs above a marble altar with a base depicting Adam and Eve's fall from grace.

"The inspirational art reminds us of our faith and tells the stories of the Bible from creation to the resurrection," Andy says. "Regardless if one ultimately chooses cremation, burial or entombment, all are welcome to reflect and pray in our mausoleums."

The cemeteries and mausoleums are open daily. Hours and other information can be found at www.rcancem.org.

Al Frank is editor of *The New Jersey Catholic* magazine. Photos are courtesy of Office of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Newark. Article is from the April edition and is reprinted with permission.



Art that is housed in the Mausoleum:

Above - altar depicting "The Creation" (l) and "The Fall of Man" (r);

St. Anthony Shrine rescued from a closed church (l); Mother Cabrini (r); St. Helena carved by Pedrini sculptors (far rt.)

